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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an instrument, the Grammar Inventory for Teachers (GIFT), that may be used to determine preservice teachers' knowledge and use of correct grammar. The paper explains that communication skills are critical characteristics of effective teachers, and preservice teachers must be competent in their knowledge and use of grammar in order to communicate effectively with students and the general public. Teachers in graduate classes helped ascertain what grammar and usage knowledge was important for teachers to know. Researchers constructed evaluation items, and teachers were asked to affirm that the items had face validity. Four language arts instructors examined the test items and agreed that the items had validity. Researchers used the split-half method to determine the reliability of the GIFT. They administered two forms of the GIFT to 40 preservice teachers to determine the split-half reliability coefficient (.76). The final instrument measured grammatical knowledge and knowledge of standard English usage, focusing on parts of speech, sentence elements, correct use of verbs, subject and verb agreement, and pronoun usage. The paper includes a copy of the GIFT. (Contains 13 references.) (SM)

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Are Preservice Teachers Literate in Grammar and Usage?

Introduction

The movement toward national standards has taken hold throughout our educational system (Schmoker and Marzano, 1999). With a renewed emphasis on restructuring teacher education and accountability, it is urgent that teacher education programs maximize efforts to produce effective teachers. American education depends upon teachers to meet the multiple instructional needs of a diverse student population. Teacher education graduates must not only be effective subject matter teachers, but must be role models in language use. Public perception of teachers is widely influenced by the teachers' grammatical use of the English language. Incorrect usage of English in oral or written communication reflects negatively on any users, but use of poor language by teachers decimates their credibility as competent educators. Teachers must model correct language usage. Kitao and Kitao (1996) concluded that the testing of grammar is one of the most important aspects of language testing and that a basic knowledge of grammar underlies the ability to use language to communicate. The purpose of this article is to present an instrument that may be used to determine preservice teachers' knowledge and use of correct grammar.

Review of Literature

The importance of good communication skills for teachers would be hard to over-estimate. May (1998) stressed that point. As Bromley (1992) pointed out, effective teachers model communication skills for students. Students learn language functions through use, and need to interact with teachers and peers as they emulate models of speech and writing (Norton, 1993). Teachers must use correct grammar for students to acquire effective and correct language skills. Effective teaching of communication skills requires commitment to excellence on the part of instructors. As noted by Palmer (1999), "whoever our students may be, whatever subject we teach, ultimately we teach who we are." (p. 10)

Research based on the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) revealed that the strongest predictor of state-level student achievement was each state's proportion of well-qualified teachers (Lewis, 1998). To be well qualified, a teacher must be able to communicate effectively, and this necessitates knowledge and correct use of grammar. Unfortunately, a review of the literature revealed a paucity of instruments published recently, and most instruments purported to measure grammatical fluency of students for whom English is a second language (pedersen, 1978; Bialystok & Froehlich, 1978; Ramirez & Polizer, 1978; and Kitae & Kitao, 1996). The need for an instrument to assess grammatical fluency is evident from a review of the literature.

Need for Assessment

Teacher educators must ascertain that preservice teachers possess effective communication skills. They must be competent in the knowledge and use of grammar. Students in the teacher education programs have numerous opportunities to acquire grammatical skills through courses and practicum experiences. Many students in the program, however, have not acquired these skills. Thus, the to ask is "are preservice teachers competent in knowledge and use of grammar?" To answer this question, the Grammar Inventory For Teachers (GIFT) was constructed.

Validity

Teachers in graduate classes ascertained what grammar and usage knowledge was important for teachers to know. Items were constructed and teachers were asked to affirm that the items had face validity. Four language arts instructors examined the test items and agreed that the items had validity.

Reliability

According to Crowl (19986) the split-half reliability coefficient is one of the most commonly used methods of determining the reliability of a teacher-made measuring instrument. The split-half method was used to determine the reliability of the GIFT. Both forms of the GIFT was administered to 40 preservice teachers to determine the split-half reliability coefficient. The correlation between the subtotal scores for odd-numbered items and the subtotal scores for even-numbered items were calculated. A correlation coefficient of +.76 was determined. Thus, there is moderate to marked statistical relationship (Koenker, 1971).

Instrument

GRAMMAR INVENTORY FOR TEACHERS (GIFT)

Purpose: Why are you being asked to respond to this Grammar Inventory For Teachers (GIFT)? Language arts teachers need to have a knowledge of English grammar and standard English usage to teach the spectrum of grammar and usage skills found at all grade levels. Responding to the inventory will help you understand language areas which you need to review.

Contents: The Grammar Inventory For Teachers (GIFT) assesses traditional grammar knowledge and elements of standard English usage. This Inventory is divided into two parts (I and II). Part I measures grammatical knowledge and Part II tests Knowledge of standard English usage.

Part I - This section inventories a person's knowledge of sentence elements including the parts of speech. Seventy (70) items compose the grammar test, and relate to these elements.

nouns	adverbs	adjectives
pronouns	action verbs	auxiliary verb
prepositions	linking verbs	prepositional
interjections	adjectives	coordinating
direct object	indirect object	correlative
complex sentence	sentence fragment	predicate
adverbial clause	adjectival clause	predicate adjective
compound sentence	complete sentence	object of
simple predicate	simple subject	complete predicate
run-on sentence	(comma splice)	

Part II - This section inventories knowledge of standard English usage in relation to correct use of verbs, pronouns, modifiers, and subject-verb agreement. There are thirty (30) items in this section. The following elements are tested.

Verb use	Pronouns	Subject/Verb Modifiers	Agreement
lay-lie	him-he	different(l.)	is-are
sit- set	its-it's	funnier(est)	have/had
fly-flew	she-her	good-well	was-were
see-saw	their-there	riper(est)	deserve(s)
break-broke	their-his/her	graceful(l.)	
come-came		pleasant(l.)	
write-right		cheaper(est)	
go-gone		larger(est)	
grow-grown		a-an	
		best	

Part I - Assessing for Grammar Knowledge

Part of this test is designed to measure your knowledge of English grammar. Each of the first seven sections on grammar is themed. You might want to read through each section first before reading the sentences to choose your answers.

Directions: Choose your answer from the categorical choices above your questions and mark your answer sheet by bubbling in between the lines of the letter selected as your answer.

Parts of Speech

Identify the part of speech underlined in each sentence. Record your choices on the answer sheet.

A. NOUN
B. PRONOUN
C. ACTION VERB
D. PREPOSITION
E. ADVERB

1. One of the most popular, of the current plays on Broadway, is Cats.

2. It's said to be a very popular play even among those who have purchased a copy of 1001 Things To Do With a Dead Cat.

3. Of course, there is always the group that attends so that each can show off his/her tee shirt.

4. It's hard to imagine grown men and women prancing around the stage with long tails dragging behind.

5. It is so popular that it has been translated into many different languages.
6. It has become one of the biggest moneymakers on Broadway.

7. It does move quickly so that it is said that none of the audience has slept through the play.

8. It is said that the play is as innovative as Hair in its time.

9. It has played in over twenty foreign countries.

10. It seems actors don't mind playing in roles that require "meowing".

A. NOUN
B. LINKING VERB
C. ADJECTIVE
D. AUXILIARY (HELPING VERB)
E. ADVERB

11. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, when elected in 1933, was given powers to create new governmental agencies and to simultaneously spend large sums of money on those programs.

12. President Roosevelt is the only president in the history of the United States to serve more than two terms of office.

13. President Andrew Johnson is one of only two presidents in history to face charges of impeachment.

14. Because of enormous public pressure, President Richard Nixon resigned before impeachment proceedings began.

15. The loquacious Ronald Reagan fascinated the media and was given widespread press coverage.

16. Until 1973, the president could decide to send the military to anyplace where there might be evidence of aggression without a declaration of war by the congress.

17. Congress retains the power of the last word by this legislation passed in 1973.

18. To his credit, Jimmy Carter appealed to both conservative and liberal voters and was able to win the presidency.

19. The oldest man to be elected to the presidency was Ronald Reagan.

20. It is said that under the United States Constitution, the President of the United States is the most powerful elected official in the world.

A. COORDINATING CONJUNCTION
B. INTERJECTION
C. PREPOSITION
D. ACTION VERB
E. CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTION

21. What would you consider to be the most popular sport in the United States today?

22. This question calls for personal opinion, of course.

23. You should consider not only participation in the sport, but also participation by spectators.

24. Perhaps football comes first to mind, as it has excelled in number of spectators, due to extensive television coverage.

25. Gymnastics came into its own due to the performance of Nadia Comanec's splendid performance at age 13.

26. The Olympic Games hold the interest of spectators around the world and introduced them to a wide variety of little known sports as well.

27. Wow! Who knew there are that many types of competition.

28. Most Americans, when questioned, will respond that either football or baseball is the most popular, depending what season of the year the question is asked.

29. Take me out to the ball game or hold that line. Oh, yes!

30. If asked to choose, and be allowed only one vote, most Americans may choose baseball because it goes with mom and apple pie.

Sentence Elements

Identify these sentence parts.

A. PREDICATE NOMINATIVE
B. ADVERBIAL CLAUSE
C. ADJECTIVE CLAUSE
D. SIMPLE PREDICATE
E. COMPLETE SUBJECT

31. How much do you remember about the thirteen original colonies?

32. All thirteen have an interesting history.

33. Massachusetts and Virginia are named for the chartered companies responsible for their settlement.

34. Two colonies were founded by William Penn: Delaware and Pennsylvania.

35. Three colonies' names incorporate the word New and were named for counties in England: New York, New Hampshire, and New Jersey.
36. After he was restored as monarch of England, Charles II wanted to repay the nobles who helped him by granting them the area south of Virginia.

A. PREDICATE NOMINATIVE
B. ADVERBIAL CLAUSE
C. ADJECTIVE CLAUSE
D. SIMPLE PREDICATE
E. COMPLETE SUBJECT

37. Georgia, which was settled by released English prisoners, was considered a buffer colony between English colonies and Spanish settlements, further south in what later became the State of Florida.

38. James Oglethorpe, who was a gruff British officer, is credited with the idea of a colony for released prisoners.

39. Peter Minuit came to the mouth of the Hudson River, bought all of Manhattan Island from the Indians for goods worth about $24, and founded the settlement of New Amsterdam.

40. The colony and the city of New Amsterdam were renamed New York in 1664 when Charles II sent a fleet to attack.

A. DIRECT OBJECT
B. PREDICATE NOMINATIVE
C. PREDICATE ADJECTIVE
D. OBJECT OF PREPOSITION
E. COMPLETE PREDICATE

41. There is a connection between learning to read and to write.

42. Children can write words on paper by copying or write their own thoughts using invented spelling.

43. Dorothy Strickland said, "There may or may not be something wrong with copying." She qualified that it would be wrong only if the copying was involuntary.

44. It has also been said that when children do come up with their own spellings that in fact do represent our alphabetic writing system there is reason to rejoice.

45. Jeanne Chall announced her new book at the International Reading Association in New Orleans in 1989, *Preventing the Fourth-Grade Slump*.

46. It is hoped that this book will be as instructive, researched, and helpful as her seminal work, *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*.

47. All of these leaders in the field of reading agreed to the dictum: Children should have control over the phonics system.
48. Dorothy Strickland referred to her book, *Emerging Literacy: Young Children Learn to Read and Write*, during the panel discussion that took place in New Orleans.

49. A paperback edition was one of the IRA Book Club selections in 1989.

A. DIRECT OBJECT
B. PREDICATE NOMINATIVE
C. PREDICATE ADJECTIVE
D. OBJECT OF PREPOSITION
E. COMPLETE PREDICATE

50. Teachers are reflecting on their teaching of writing, as well as reading, in these times of transition.

A. INDIRECT OBJECT
B. SIMPLE SUBJECT
C. PREDICATE ADJECTIVE
D. PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE
E. OBJECT OF PREPOSITION

51. If you were shipwrecked on a deserted island, would you be more directed by expertise or intuition?

52. Some scientists' answers would be surprising.

53. Expertise and intuition are not separate phenomena, challenging that precept of the ancient dichotomy.

54. Some still say that one is a personal gift; the other the result of experience.

55. Intuition is known for its unpredictability.

56. We still tend to listen to certain intuitive persons sometimes against our better judgement because they seem never to be wrong.

57. These intuitive people share one essential trait: They are experts on one particular field of expertise.

58. The intuitive person seems to know immediately the solution, but across his mind certain information has been chunked, according to University of Pittsburgh professor Dr. Robert Glaser.

59. Annemarie Palincsar and Ann Brown have been running experiments on the reading comprehension of both poor and good comprehenders, and after six years, have

concluded that poor readers can be taught a strategic approach enabling them to become better comprehenders.

60. The key to intuition then is, according to Glaser, the ability to take on problems that go a bit beyond what we have already mastered, classifying and reclassifying knowledge, and organizing information related to our specific goals.

Match the following sentences to these descriptions:

A. SIMPLE SENTENCE
B. COMPOUND SENTENCE
C. COMPLEX SENTENCE
D. SENTENCE FRAGMENT
E. RUN-ON (COMMA SPLICE) SENTENCE

61. One of the most popular sports in the United States is golf.

62. It is satisfying to get outdoors in the fresh air on a beautiful day, and it is not always necessary to score under par.

63. Although a standard course has eighteen holes, there are others that have only nine holes.

64. Trees, lakes, streams, and ditches–the hazards of nature.

65. The sport of golf has a distinguished history.

66. The Honorable Company of Edinburgh Golfers was founded in 1744, there's nothing older as played today.

67. Even though the St. Andrews Golf Club is older, the first eighteen hole golf course built in the United States is located in Chicago.

68. Bobby Jones is perhaps the best known golfer of all times, and he won the grand slam of golf in 1930.

69. Lee Trevino, witty and talkative, is well-known today.

70. Babe Zaharias was one of the most famous of women's golfers, she was one of the greatest women athletes of all times.

Part II

Directions - In each of the sentences in this section of the test are two possible answers bracketed by parentheses. Choose the correct answer which has either A or B above it, and bubble in the answers on your answer sheet.

A B

Example: Charles (set, sat) the dishes on the table. Set is correct; so A is the correct response to fill in on the answer sheet.

Correct Use of Verbs

A B

71. Sam told the cat to (lay, lie) down

A B

72. We (sit, sat) and waited for the play to begin.

A B

73. She (fly, flew) from Tampa to Miami.

A B

74. She (see, saw) an ambulance rushing to an accident.

A B

75. The glass (break, broke) when she dropped it on the tray.

A B

76. Did you (see, saw) the movie, "Batman"?

A B

77. The taxi (come, came) too late for her to keep her appointment in Miami.

A B

78. The magazines are (write, right) for airline travelers.

79. She searched her purse, and asked, "Where have my
A B
keys (go, gone)?"

A B

80. Her plants had (growed, grown) while she was away.

Modifiers

A B

81. The dogs and the cat behaved (different, differently).

A B

82. The (funniest, most funniest) dog jumped through a hoop.

A B

83. The dancer performed (good, well).

A B

84. I chose the (riper, ripest) apple in the basket.

A B

85. The ballerina leaped (graceful, gracefully) through the air.

A B

86. We had a (pleasant, pleasantly) time at the ballet.

A B

87. Balcony tickets are (cheaper, more cheaper) than the orchestra.

A B

88. The dancer with the dark hair was the (larger, largest) of the three.

A B

89. Susan wanted (a, an) cup of hot chocolate.

A B

90. This was the (best, bestest) football game I'd ever seen on television.

Subject and Verb Agreement

A B

91. "Bad English" (is, are) a rock group.

A B

92. It seems that Elvis Presley (have been, has been) seen in almost every city in the country.

A B

93. Much time and money (was, were) spent in trying to locate him.

A B

94. Not one of the stories of seeing him (deserve, deserves,) to be considered as fact.

A B

95. There (was, were) no men said to have seen him.

Pronoun Usage

A B

96. It was (her, she) and I who first saw him in Memphis.

A B

97. He likes (its, it's) color.

A B

98. It was (him, he) who answered the phone.

A B

99. He was living with (their, there) friends.

A B

100. Everyone went in (their, his/her) own car.

GIFT ANSWER KEY

1. A	21. D	41. E	61. A	81. B
2. E	22. C	42. A	62. B	82. A
3. B	23. A	43. A	63. C	83. B
4. D	24. D	44. E	64. D	84. B
5. C	25. C	45. B	65. A	85. B
6. B	26. A	46. C	66. E	86. A
7. C	27. B	47. A	67. C	87. A
8. A	28. E	48. B	68. B	88. B
9. E	29. B	49. B	69. A	89. A
10. D	30. D	50. A	70. E	90. A
11. E	31. E	51. E	71. B	91. A
12. B	32. D	52. B	72. B	92. B
13. A	33. D	53. D	73. B	93. B
14. C	34. E	54. B	74. B	94. B
15. C	35. E	55. C	75. B	95. B
16. D	36. B	56. E	76. A	96. B
17. C	37. C	57. B	77. B	97. A
18. A	38. C	58. E	78. B	98. A
19. B	39. D	59. D	79. B	99. A
20. B	40. A	60. B	80. B	100. B

Summary and Conclusion

Communication skills are critical characteristics of effective teachers. Preservice teachers must be competent in the use and knowledge of grammar to be able to communicate effectively with students and the public in general. Assessing preservice teachers' grammatical knowledge is the logical procedure for insuring that they are competent and to locate those who need additional instruction. Ease of scoring is a pertinent asset in constructing a grammar test (Kitao & Kitao, 1996). The GIFT is easy to administer and score. Most importantly, the GIFT provides instructors information for assisting their students with grammar and usage remediation. Helping preservice teachers acquire communication skills helps them become competent teachers in meeting the challenge of modeling and delivering requisite language knowledge to the consumers and users of the 21st Century.

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